

C 12 H 15 / 51



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Publication number:

0 262 710
A1

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EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

⑤ Application number: 87201691.0

⑤ Date of filing: 07.09.87

⑤ Int. Cl.⁴ A61K 37/02, A61K 39/02,
G01N 33/564, G01N 33/68,
C07K 13/00, C07K 15/00,
C12N 15/00, C12N 1.20,
C12N 7/00,

No	références, formules, pages à photocopier, etc	No	classement
1		1	A61K 33/04
2		2	C12 H 15 / 20 B
203			
3	claims	3	INF C12 H 15 / 56.
4	claims	4	INF C12 H 15 / 42
5	C.	5	INF. A61K 39/02
6	C.	6	INF. G01N 33/564.

⊕ A *Mycobacterium bovis* BCG polypeptide having a molecular mass of about 64 kD was found to be useful as an immunogen inducing resistance to autoimmune arthritis and similar autoimmune diseases.

The invention relates to the use of this polypeptide for the preparation of compositions for the alleviation, treatment and diagnosis of autoimmune diseases, especially arthritis conditions.

The invention also relates to a polypeptide comprising the epitope essential for this activity. The polypeptide has the formula

171	181	191	201
GLITVEESNT	FGLQLELTEG	MRFDKGYISG	YFVTDPERQE
211	221	231	
ALLDPYILL	VSSKLVSTVKD	LLPLLEKVIQ.	

Further, the invention relates to polypeptide showing sequential homology with said polypeptide, and to derivatives and multimers thereof. Also, microorganisms expressing the polypeptides either as such or as part of a fusion protein or as a multimer, form part of the invention.

Finally, the invention relates to pharmaceutical compositions, diagnostic compositions and test kits comprising a compound according to the invention.

rabbit sera. The article states that among 770 clones tested, several were found that produced various mycobacterial antigens in low amounts, with concentrations generally close to the detection limit. One particular clone was chosen for further investigation. This clone produced a 64 kD antigen. By placing the lambda promoter P_L in front of the structural gene of this antigen, an overproducing *E. coli* strain was obtained. The article shows that antigens cross-reacting with the 64 kD protein are present in a wide variety of mycobacteria and also in so-called purified protein derivatives which are routinely used for skin tests. Finally, it is stated in the article that preliminary experiments indicate the presence of antibodies against the 64 kD antigen in sera from tuberculosis patients.

According to the present invention, Antigen A was found to have the following amino acid sequence:

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1  MAKTIAYDEE ARRGLERGLN ALADAVKVTIL GPKGRNVVLE KKGAPTITN DGVSTAKETIE
61 LEDPYEKIGA ELVKEVAKKT DDVAGDGTTT ATVLAQALVR EGLPNVAAGA NPLGLNKGIE
121 KAVEKVTETL LKGAKEVETK EQIAATAAIS AGDQSIGDLI AEAMDKVQNE GVITVEESNI
15 181 FGLQLELTEG MRFDKGYISG YFVTDPERQE AVLEDPYILL VSSKVSTVKD LLPLEKVTG
141 AGKPLLIIE DVEGEALSTL VVNKIRGTFK SVAVKAPGFG DRKAMLQDM AILTGGGVIS
301 EEVGLTLENA DLSLLGKARK VVVTKDETTI VEGAGDTDAI AGRVAQIRQE IENSDDSYER
361 EKLQERLAKL AGGVAVIKAG AATEVELKER KHRIEDAVRN AKAAVEEGIV AGGGVTLLCA
421 APTLDELKLE GDEATGANIV KVALEAPLQK IAFNSGLEPG VVAEKVRNLP AGHGLNAQTC
20 481 VYEDLLAAGV ADPVKVTRSA LQNAASIAGL FLTTEAVVAD KPEKEKASVP GGGDMGGMIF

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Detailed discussion of the invention

As mentioned above clones A2b and A2c as disclosed in *EP A O 181 364 can be used to identify antigens associated with arthritogenicity or with suppression of arthritogenicity. Both clones respond to whole mycobacterial and both A2b and A2c respond to antigen A.

T-cell clones A2b, and A2c and control cell-line C1a (anti-ovalbumin) were assayed for in vitro proliferative responses to *Micobacterium tuberculosis*, Antigen A, *E. coli* control lysate, ovalbumin (OVA) and mitogen ConA in a standard test (20×10^3 clone line cells, 2×10^5 irradiated accessory cells and antigens in optimum concentration per well, ^3H -Thymidine incorporation for 18 hours after 48 hours of incubation). The following table A shows the test results which are expressed as stimulation indexes.

TABLE A.

	M. tub.	Ant. A	coli contr.	OVA	ConA
A2b	180	500	2.9	-	430
A2c	304	516	1.5	-	390
C1a	-	1.5	1.2	45	64

The in vivo potency of Antigen A was checked by immunizing rats with Antigen A before and after induction of arthritis with *M. tuberculosis*. The test with challenge after immunization was carried out as follows:

Groups of 4 Lewis rats were treated by intraperitoneal inoculation of water, Antigen A (50 μg) and *E. coli* control lysate (amount equivalent to coli content of 50 μg Antigen A) in oil. 35 Days later, susceptibility to induction of adjuvant arthritis was tested by inoculating the rats intracutaneously with *M. tuberculosis* (1 mg) in oil. Occurrence of arthritis was checked by daily inspection of the rat joints. The results are shown in table B.

TABLE I.

Cross-reactivity between Antigen A and antigens present in other bacteria.

	Antigen A	64kD of	E. coli	60kD	Treppolli	Shig.	Salmon.	Klebsiella
10								
	MCA HATR							
	1-24	+	-	+	+	+	+	+
15	F47-10	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Polycl. anti							
	comm. ag.							
20	Legion/							
	Pseudom.	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

Serological cross-reactivity as shown by Western-blot analysis.

HATR 1-24 and F47-10 are monoclonal antibodies raised against Treponema and Mycobacterium tuberculosis respectively.

The polyclonal serum was raised against the common antigen of Legionella and Pseudomonas.

This indicates that epitopes present on Antigen A are similarly present on presumably equivalent proteins of various bacterium species, such as from Mycobacterium, Escherichia, Treponema, Shigella, Salmonella, Yersinia, Nocardia, Camovibacter, or Klebsiella species. Particularly, antigen A amino acid sequence 190-213 is also present in a corresponding 65 KD protein from Mycobacterium leprae, with the exception that, in the M. leprae protein, amino acid 206 is not proline, but alanine.

Further, it was found that only part of the Antigen A sequence is responsible for the stimulating activity upon T-cell clones A2b and A2c. This was determined by testing Antigen A fragments, namely truncated derivatives produced by deletion mutants of the gene, fusion proteins with β -galactosidase and proteolysis products of Antigen A, for their ability to stimulate said T-cell clones. These fragments were obtained by means of recombinant-DNA techniques, by incorporating parts of the Antigen A gene, in some cases fused to the β -galactosidase gene, into a plasmide and expressing in E. coli K12 M1070.

The peptide with Antigen A amino acid sequence 234-540 was shown not to stimulate clones A2b and A2c. However, the fragment lacking amino acid sequence 481-540 did. β -Galactosidase-fused peptides with Antigen A amino acid sequence 61-540, 109-540 and 171-540 were reactive, those with amino acid sequences 272-540 and 280-540 were not reactive. β -Galactosidase alone was not reactive.

Therefore, the epitope responsible for the stimulation of T-cell clones A2b and A2c resides in amino acid sequence 171-234.

In order to further characterize the area which is essential for the T-cell epitopes, protease digests of Antigen A were tested for their stimulating activity on both T-cell clones. Digesting Antigen A with clostripain yielded only one reactive mixture of two peptides. The mixture is called CP15. The two peptides, which were not separated, are designated as CP15a and CP 15b. The CP15a sequence begins with amino acid 193 and that of CP15b starts with amino acid 197.

Digesting CP15 with trypsin, again, yielded a reactive mixture of two peptides (CP-TP-T12a and b) with sequences beginning with amino acid 193, and 196, respectively, as well as a non-reactive peptide, the sequence of which starts with amino acid 209. The carboxy ends of the peptides were not determined.

It may be concluded from these results that the epitope responsible for the stimulation of T-cell clones A2b and A2c resides in Antigen A amino acid sequence 193-234, and more specifically in the amino acid sequence 193-208.

means so as to establish the presence and degree of lymphocyte activation: amongst these there may be mentioned:

- a. production of lymphokines (such as interleukin-2-(IL-2));
- b. gamma interferon;
- 5 c. migration inhibition factor (MIF);
- d. expression of membrane markers, such as IL-2 receptor; peanut agglutination receptor;
- e. expression of enzymes such as heparanase.
- b. determination of antibody titer in absolute terms or as a ratio of the values obtained by different compositions, said values or ratios being indicative of the presence or absence of the disease. Quantitative
- 10 values obtained are of use in establishing the severity of the disease.

The diagnostic compositions according to the invention may be prepared by combining one or more antigenic compounds according to the invention as above-defined with suitable adjuvants and auxiliary components. Standardized kits with reference and calibration means are of value in the rapid and convenient determination of arthritic disease and its stage and/or severity.

Claims

1. Use of peptide of the formula

1 MAKTIAYDEE ARRGLERGLN ALADATKNTL GPKGRNTVLE KHWCAPTITN DGVSIARETE
 61 LEDPYEKIGA ELVKEVAKNT DDVAGDGTIT ATVLAQALVR EQLPWAAGA NPLGLRGOTE
 121 KAVENVTETL LKGAKEVETK EQLAATAAIS AGDQSIGDLI AEANDKVCNE GVITVEESNT
 181 FGLQLELTEG MRFDKGYISG YFVTDPERQE AVLEDPYILL VSSKVSTVKD LLPLLEKVG
 241 AGKPLLIIE DVEGEALSTL VVWKIRGTFK SVAVKAPGFG DRRHAWLODM AILTGGOVIS
 301 EEVGLTLENA DLSLLGKAPK VVWKDETTI VEGAGDTDAI AGRVAQIRQE IENSDDSYDR
 361 EKLQERLAKL AGGVAVIKAG AATEVELKER KHRIEDAVRN AKAAVEEGIV AGGQVTLLOA
 421 APTLDELKLE GDEATGANIV KVALEAPLKQ IAFNSGLEPG VVAENVTNLP AGRGLNACTG
 481 VYEDLLAAGV ADPWKVTRSA LQNAASIAGL FLITEANTAD KPEKERASTP GGGDMQGMDF

for the preparation of compositions for the alleviation, treatment and diagnosis of autoimmune diseases, especially arthritic conditions.

2. Polypeptide having the following amino acid sequence:

171 GVITVEESNT 181 FGLQLELTEG 191 MRFDKGYISG 201 YFVTDPERQE
 211 AVLEDPYILL 221 VSSKVSTVKD 231 LLPLLEKVG,

3. A polypeptide useful for the diagnosis of, or as immunogen against autoimmune diseases, which polypeptide is composed of 4 to 70 amino acid residues, in the amino sequence of which at least 4 of the amino acid residues are in the same relative position as the same amino acid residues are in the
- 45 polypeptide of claim 2.

4. The polypeptide of claim 3, further characterized in that it comprises in its amino acid sequence at least one of amino acid residues F, D, K and G corresponding to positions 193, 194, 195 and 196 of the polypeptide of claim 2.

5. The polypeptide of claim 4 comprising in its molecule the amino acid sequence 193-234 of the polypeptide of claim 2.

6. The polypeptide of claim 4 comprising in its molecule the amino acid sequence 193-208 of the polypeptide of claim 2.

7. The polypeptide of claim 4 comprising in its molecule the amino acid sequence 160-196 of the polypeptide of claim 2.

8. Compound according to any one of claims 2 to 7 coupled to at least one radical enhancing its antigenicity and immunogenicity.

EP 27 20 1691

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 4)
D, Y	WO-A-8 505 034 (UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON AND YEDA RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CO. LTD) * Claims 1,3-5,7-17; page 2, lines 15-25; page 6, line 12 - page 7, line 15 *	1-15	A 61 K 37/02 A 61 K 39/02 G 01 N 33/564 G 01 N 33/68 C 07 K 13/00 C 07 K 15/00 C 12 N 15/00 C 12 N 1/20
D, Y	INFECTION AND IMMUNITY, vol. 50, no. 3, December 1985, pages 800-806, American Society for Microbiology; J.E.R. THOLE et al.: "Cloning of Mycobacterium bovis BCG DNA and expression of antigens in Escherichia coli" * Whole document *	1-15	
A	BIOLOGICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 82, no. 2, 1986, page AB-444, abstract no. 13678, Biological Abstracts, Inc., Philadelphia, PA., US; F. EMMRICH et al.: "A recombinant 64 kilodalton protein of Mycobacterium bovis BCG specifically stimulates human T4 clones reactive to mycobacterial antigens", & J. EXP. MED. 163(4), 1024-1029, 1986 * Abstract *	1	
A	THE LANCET, vol. 2, no. 8502, 9th August 1986, pages 310-313, London, GB; T.H.M. OTTENHOFF et al.: "Evidence for an HLA-DR4-associated immune-response gene for mycobacterium tuberculosis" * Page 310, summary; page 312, lines 23-27 *	1	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4) C 12 N 7/00 C 12 N 1/20 C 12 R 1/42
Place of search	Date of completion of the search	Examiner	
THE HAGUE	14-12-1987	RYCKEBOSCH A.O.A.	

CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS

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